

A theologian's disappointing departure from biblical creation

Nick Sabato

Greatly influenced by the Whitcomb and Morris classic *The Genesis Flood*, theologian Ken Keathley once upheld, defended and promoted the young-earth/global flood position. Due to a number of 'disappointments' with the young-earth creationist community he has recently moved to a position of compromise. Keathley's presentation provides young-earth creationists with the opportunity to determine if such disappointments are warranted, to evaluate potential motives for compromise, and to address the importance of biblical authority. Finally it will be shown that his basis for determining whether or not to accept the plain reading of Genesis is flawed from the outset.

Kenneth D. Keathley is Professor of Theology and Dean of Graduate Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹ He has made some useful contributions to theodicy and the subjects of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.^{1,2} This essay is a brief response to his paper³ presented at "a conference devoted to discussing the differences between adherents of the two views"⁴ concerning biblical origins, namely young-earth creationism⁵ and old-earth creationism. Since Keathley does not elaborate on which particular old-earth position he now adheres to, responses will necessarily be limited to dealing with his reasons for disappointment with young-earth creationism. Space does not permit dealing with all of the varied objections he raises—his discussions on the subjects of 'appearance of age' and 'presuppositionalism versus fideism' each deserve a detailed response not included here. In any case, it is not necessary to deal with every objection and accusation, for it appears as though they are peppered throughout the paper merely to give the appearance that Keathley has done his homework. 'Elephant hurling' comes to mind when sifting through his arguments.

Keathley begins by claiming that it was due to "the shortcomings of most of the YEC arguments and the shenanigans of certain YEC proponents" (p. 1) that he was led to embrace old-earth creationism. He says that what Whitcomb and Morris meant by 'scientific creationism' was that "an assessment of the scientific evidence which was not biased by antitheistic presuppositions would objectively conclude that the earth is only a few thousand years old." (p. 2). This caricature of biblical creationism falsely conveys the idea that Whitcomb and Morris proposed a 'purely empirical' analysis of geological data from a presuppositionless⁶ position when, in fact, they couldn't have been clearer in admitting the role that presuppositions play in scientific inquiry. It was not their contention, contrary to what Keathley seems to be implying, that a

purely empirical survey of rocks would lead one to believe in the Genesis Flood. In *The Genesis Flood* they were sure to note that "no one ever arrives at a world-and-life view by such a purely inductive method"⁷ and that "the essential differences between Biblical catastrophism and evolutionary uniformitarianism are not over the factual data of geology but over the interpretations of those data."⁸

Much more can be said about presuppositionalism but the point here is that Whitcomb and Morris started with the reality of a global Flood not because the rocks 'told' them about it but because the Bible is God-breathed and inerrant, including its record of earth history. These authors did not expect 'science' to discover that the earth is only a few thousand years old apart from the biblical record, and a recent publication by Whitcomb reiterates that fact.

"Apart from the grace of God, the Bible tells us, men do not want to see the overwhelmingly obvious and universal signs of our Intelligent Designer . . . [ID] ignores God's written revelation concerning the true condition of the human heart/mind and the absolute necessity of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit of God through regeneration."⁹

Dispensationalism and the young-earth creationism movement

In noting Morris and Whitcomb's opposition to uniformitarianism and alluding to the belief that blindness to the evidences of a young earth was part of what Peter predicted (2 Pet. 3:3–7), Keathley says of this 'new' YEC movement that "flood geology and young-earth creationism fit very well within the premillennial worldview of classic Dispensationalism which dominated evangelical thinking for much of the 20th century" (p. 2). Though not our primary concern here, it is worth briefly addressing this alleged 'connection' between young-earth creationism and

Dispensationalism. Firstly, whether or not young-earth creationism ‘fits very well’ within classic Dispensationalism is irrelevant to the truthfulness of the Bible’s record of a recent creation and global flood. Certainly, ‘young-earth creationism’ is not a new position but was the dominant view of Christians for most of church history.^{10,11} Secondly, it can be argued that the opposite of Keathley’s assertion is true, despite Whitcomb and Morris’s own embrace of that “unified interpretive scheme”¹². It was actually the work of premillennial Dispensationalist C.I. Scofield (figure 1), through his *Scofield Reference Bible*, which had been in large part responsible for indoctrinating multitudes of Christians with the gap theory “as a means of reconciling the Bible with modern geological theories”.¹³ Weston Fields noted that

“Probably no reference Bible ... has ever been as broadly distributed in the English-speaking world. ... The inclusion of this [gap] theory in the Scofield Bible is most unfortunate, for it has led so many into believing a theory which was tailored to harmonize science in its present fluid form and the Bible in its immutable form.”¹⁴

Since 1909 Scofield’s work “has been the doctrinal touchstone for believers in the pre-millennial [*sic*] dispensationalist ... system”.¹⁵ And according to O.T. Allis, even John Nelson Darby accepted the gap theory.¹³

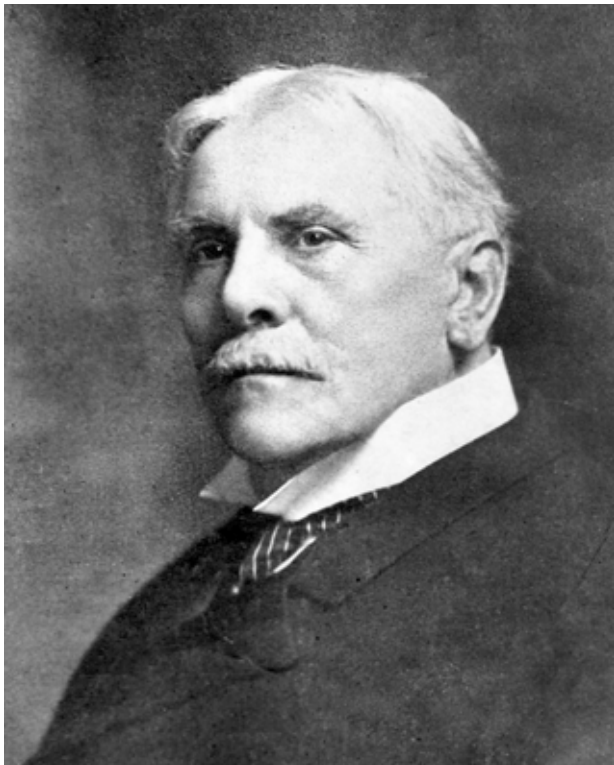


Figure 1: C.I. Scofield (1843–1921) was a key figure responsible for the spread of the Genesis ‘gap theory’. He is most known for his promulgation of Dispensationalism and its associated futurist eschatology.

So, other than the opportunity to charge compromisers with apostasy for denying a young earth (p. 2) and perhaps the tendency of Dispensationalists and YECs to ‘take the Bible literally’,¹⁶ it can hardly be seen how young-earth creationism ‘fit very well’ within premillennial Dispensationalism in the time leading up to the Whitcomb and Morris publication. Obviously the popular gap theory is at odds with young-earth creationism.

An overview of Keathley’s objections

Keathley highlights evidences made by Morris and Whitcomb in 1961 which have since been discarded (2nd law began at the Fall; Paluxy River fossils; canopy theory). He makes much of the fact there are major components of Whitcomb and Morris’s thesis which have been either revised or totally abandoned in subsequent decades of creationist research. He writes, “Unfortunately, as YEC proponent Paul Garner acknowledges, ‘not all of the ideas of the book have stood the test of time’” (p. 6). But this partial quote is misleading. What Garner actually said was:

“*Although* not all the ideas in the book have stood the test of time, Whitcomb and Morris are rightly regarded as pioneers for provoking serious thought among Christian scholars concerning the geological implications of the Flood. Today, many creationists, building upon the *foundational scriptural insights* of these men, are seeking to reinterpret the geological record ... as a record of events taking place in biblical Earth history. ... Since the 1960s, a number of scientific models of the Flood have been proposed[emphasis added].”¹⁷

So despite Morris and Whitcomb’s discussion of things like the Paluxy fossils, belief in the reality of a global flood according to the Genesis record *was never contingent upon Paluxy or any other physical evidence*. The starting point for any YEC Flood model developed today must be the plain words of Scripture just as it was for Whitcomb and Morris, an approach for which they should be applauded (figure 2). The full context of Garner’s statement is actually a commendation of their methodology and acknowledgment that models are not inerrant and their authors not infallible.

Furthermore, Keathley’s criticism of changing young-earth models and discarded evidence actually backfires when one realizes that honest scientific research must involve correction and revision of models when necessary. Would Keathley have preferred the alternative? It seems highly unlikely that he would have been more tolerant of young-earth creationism if YECs had stubbornly held on to early models and shoddy evidence in spite of contrary data in textual and scientific research. YECs can hardly be criticized



Figure 2: In turning to the geological theories of old-earth advocates Keathley is missing out on the most obvious explanation for massive geological formations such as Grand Canyon. Geologist Steve Austin was right to call it a *Monument to Catastrophe*.

for their willingness to discard beloved models when those models can no longer sustain textual and scientific scrutiny.

Keathley makes a broad accusation of YEC ‘shenanigans’ (p. 1) and states that it was in the 1980s that he realized that “some within the young-earth camp lacked integrity” (p. 6). Not only does he fail to provide one example of such ‘shenanigans’ or dishonesty but he also seems to ignore the fact that not every YEC agrees on every detail when it comes to geological and cosmological models. It has been openly acknowledged that there have been integrity issues by YECs¹⁸, and most YECs would rightly condemn the ‘whatever works’ approach and promotion of dubious evidence.¹⁹ Accusing YECs in general of shenanigans is an unwarranted sweeping generalization.

The canopy theory

One of the ‘serious problems’ (p. 6) with Morris and Whitcomb’s model, according to Keathley, is the canopy theory. Yet he admits that Andrew Snelling and “other current YEC advocates recognize that the biblical evidence for the canopy theory is tenuous at best” (p. 7). So, the text doesn’t demand a vapor canopy—there was no need to force it into young-earth

models in the first place. It should also be noted here that it is not primarily because of a runaway greenhouse effect that the canopy should be dropped but because of a reassessment of the scriptural warrant for it. Certainly, if the biblical text unequivocally taught a water vapor canopy, then YECs would do well to accept it, regardless of any yet-to-be-worked-out calculations necessary to produce a viable model.

Keathley says that Russ Humphreys’ “idiosyncratic interpretation” of Genesis 1:6–8 is that the ‘waters above’ are “located at the other side of the universe” (p. 7). But this is an oversimplification of what Humphreys actually put forth in his 1994 book.²⁰ It was not some arbitrary way to get rid of the ‘waters above’, as Keathley’s audience might infer from his paraphrase, and other YECs have favourably commented on Humphreys’ exegesis.²¹ This boundary at the edge of interstellar space also played an important role in his cosmological model.²² But Humphreys’ model aside, the biblical text is what must drive our understanding of the waters above, whether or not empirical verification is even possible. As Snelling himself emphasized, “This is no easy matter to resolve scientifically. However, the biblical data on this matter are paramount.”²³ It is noteworthy that since challenges to Humphreys’ model have arisen from

among fellow YECs and Humphreys has since altered his model, twenty years later he nevertheless defends his initial exegesis concerning the location of the ‘waters above’.^{24,25}

The point is, whatever the ‘waters above’ are referring to, the biblical text in no way mandates that it refer to a vapor canopy. Since the text doesn’t require it, Keathley should not make so much of the fact that it has been dropped by the majority of YECs. Again, a once-popular hypothesis was dropped; the biblical text was not.

The geologic column

Keathley claims that while Whitcomb and Morris did not endorse the standard geologic column modern YECs do accept it. He references Snelling for support here, and asserts that “The column is real, and so is the sequence of the fossil record” (p. 9). But Whitcomb and Morris rejected the column *primarily* because of its uniformitarian roots, and there are YECs today who do not want to see it incorporated into Flood models for the same philosophical reasons. In addition, YECs have pointed to major discrepancies in the field data itself with regard to the conceptual standard column versus the actual rock record.²⁶ Keathley’s remark, “the column is real”, betrays his ignorance of the distinction between the conceptual column and the actual strata.

Keathley also seems to be unaware of the fact that there is ongoing creationist research and debate with regard to the geological column.²⁷ Or, perhaps he ignores it in order to more easily punch holes in *The Genesis Flood*, continually contrasting it with the more recent *Earth’s Catastrophic Past*. But Snelling’s general appreciation of the column (as well as catastrophic plate tectonics) is not shared by all YECs. Oard posits that the column “is a general order of Flood deposition but highly nonlinear and with many exceptions”.²⁸ Reed, Klevberg, and Froede advocate abandoning the geological column altogether, since it “rests on the presuppositions of evolution, deep time, and uniformitarianism”.²⁹ The column and CPT³⁰ are debated geological subjects among biblical creationists and do not represent any ‘official’ young-earth model. The position embraced by all biblical YECs is with regard to the Genesis text itself—that it is inspired and inerrant Hebrew historical narrative³¹ and must not be allegorized in order to accommodate the fallible wisdom of fallen man.

YECs and ‘accelerated evolution’

Keathley charges YECs with promoting post-flood ‘accelerated evolution’ to account for the number of species on Earth today. He says that “[Hugh] Ross considers it ironic that, in their attempt to rescue the global flood model, YEC adherents are embracing a version of ‘ultra-efficient biological evolution’” (p. 11). But Ross’s nonsense about YECs holding to “ultra-

efficient biological evolution” was dealt a mortal blow by Sarfati a decade ago in *Refuting Compromise*. Keathley seems to be ignorant of this as well, even though he references Sarfati’s book later in his paper. Sarfati shows that Ross’s allegations about ultra-rapid evolution are based on his refusal to acknowledge any speciation occurring today. But rapid speciation has nothing at all to do with evolution and has long been a component of Flood models. Evolution, by definition, is *uphill*, necessarily requiring an increase in genetic information. Speciation has to do with variation within the biblical ‘kind’,³² or ‘baramin’,³³ and offers no support for microbe-to-man evolution. Speciation, therefore, is not “ultra-efficient biological evolution” at all, and modern examples of rapid speciation are acknowledged by both creationists and evolutionists.³⁴

Informed creationists do not confuse (or conflate) uphill evolution with post-flood rapid speciation as Ross does. “Ross seems not to understand that producing a new reproductively isolated population is, by definition, a new species.”³⁵ This new species is merely the result of the outgrowth of previously existing information inherited ultimately from the more genetically robust ‘baramin’ (“the basic type of plant or animal as they appeared from the hand of the creator”³⁶). Ross and Keathley are without excuse for alleging that YECs believe in any form of evolution.

Changing laws of nature

Keathley accuses YECs of appealing to God’s changing of the laws of nature during the Flood to account for the age of rocks determined by radiometric dating. He does not actually provide an example of a creationist stating that God “changed the laws of nature”. His only reference here is to Snelling, who is quoted as saying, “hundreds of millions of years worth of radioisotope decay (at today’s measured rates) must have occurred during the Flood year, only about 4,500 years ago” (p. 10). It sounds like Keathley wants to accuse Snelling of a ‘god of the gaps’ solution for radiometric data, but referring to evidence of possible occasions of accelerated nuclear decay is not the same as asserting that ‘God changed the laws of nature’. Informed creationists are well aware of the reasons why radiometric dating of rocks should not be trusted.³⁷ Yet Keathley ignores the RATE project and, in the space of six sentences, has swept all creationist research on radiometric dating under the rug. Keathley goes on:

“Appealing to a change in the laws of nature marks a remarkable change in YEC strategy, and in many ways it also makes a significant admission. As a strategy, it indicates an end to any real attempt to empirically establish the historicity of a global flood. Miracles, by definition, cannot be scientifically examined. The appeal also admits that the scientific evidence does not support the YEC model” (pp. 10–11).

Keathley should take some of his own advice and refrain from subjecting miraculous events recorded in Scripture to ‘scientific authentication’. If “miracles, by definition, cannot be scientifically examined”, then on what basis does he reject a recent six-day creation and global Flood? If the Creation Week was a one-time miraculous event which can-not be scientifically examined, then why does he insist upon the uniformitarian age of the earth, which would *of necessity* conflict with the biblical data? If events like six-day creation and the global Flood—which are miraculous—cannot be scientifically examined and refuted, then how, in appealing to science, does he turn around and criticize YECs for upholding the plain statements of Scripture? If the Scripture itself clearly *does not* teach any form of ‘old-earth creationism’ such as the undisclosed variety Keathley now embraces, and it clearly *does not* teach a tranquil or localized Flood which would leave no significant geological record, then what exactly is his basis for rejecting the view he once upheld as biblical? Is he not subjecting miraculous events recorded in Scripture to scientific analysis, the very thing he says is prohibited?

On this point, YECs publish models of what may have occurred during the global Flood with regard to geophysical activity. The miraculously initiated global Flood left us with an entirely reshaped landscape as well as unique formations attributable to this singular catastrophe. YECs discuss the inevitable geomorphological implications of such a major cataclysmic event and look at the physical world from that point *a priori*. This in no way denies the miraculous nature of God’s direct activity in causing the Flood. Oard, in noting that Snelling addresses the “natural-supernatural philosophy of miracles”³⁸ quotes Psalm 104:7³⁹ and comments, “there was a supernatural component, but God must have let nature take

its course, for instance, allowing water to flow downhill.”⁴⁰ Of course the Flood was miraculous, and of course such an event would have left physical evidence all over the globe.

It is also relevant to this discussion that God works through both primary and secondary means. Theologians have long noted that God executes His will through both creation and providence, and it is for this reason that Keathley’s bit about ‘changing laws of nature’ is an illegitimate gripe. Reed and Williams handled this issue beautifully:

“We reject the categories ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ in explanation and return to the categories of ‘God’s direct immanent action’ and ‘God’s indirect immanent action.’ God governs His creation; our only question is whether events represent the regular maintenance of secondary causes or a direct intervention in the created order, even if it overrides those regularities Secular ‘natural laws’ are shown to be the regularities of God’s providential care for His creation. They do not preclude God’s direct action in space and time, even contrary to those regularities, because omnipotence is a prerequisite of providence and by definition that means that God is free to act however He wills.”⁴¹

Keathley refers to *The Bible, Rocks and Time* by Davis Young and Ralph Stearley, and based on Keathley’s faith in science, refusal to align himself with any particular old-earth position, and his illogical juxtaposition of biblical inerrancy and Genesis non-history, it appears that he was heavily influenced by the book. According to Oard “a series of books could be written countering the numerous geological errors and misrepresentations in this book.”⁴² Apparently it was still persuasive enough to uproot Keathley’s confidence in young-earth creationism. This leads one to conclude that his early

enthusiasm for the YEC movement must have been built upon the shifting sands of evidentialism rather than the bedrock of presuppositionalism.⁴³

In Keathley’s book on soteriology there are numerous references to William Lane Craig.⁴⁴ Perhaps Keathley was also influenced by Craig’s compromise position on the doctrine of creation.⁴⁵

In briefly touching on the 19th century geologists, Keathley concludes that they “gave up flood geology only reluctantly . . . after they were convinced that the empirical evidence left them with no choice” (p. 13). While there are historians who take this view⁴⁶, this can hardly be said of the scriptural geologists analyzed by Mortenson. He informs us that

“All of the scriptural geologists were convinced that Genesis 1–11 did give an infallible historical outline or framework for developing a history of the earth.”⁴⁷

“They believed that with the rejection of the plain teaching of Genesis, the proper



Figure 3: Keathley is slow to accept the plain reading of the Genesis text but quick to accept the flawed and fallible wisdom of men. An embarrassing example of man’s ‘wisdom’ adorns the top of this merchandise display case at the Virginia Aquarium gift shop, Virginia Beach.

interpretation and authority of the rest of Scripture would be undermined so that faith in other important biblical doctrines, including the origin of evil, the gospel, and the second coming of Christ, would slowly be eroded.”⁴⁸

History shows that their concerns were well founded.

But even if Keathley’s assertion was true of any number of geologists at that time, such would only concede the point YECs have been making all along: that Christians have been too eager to reinterpret the plain words of Scripture for the sake of accommodating naturalistic axioms and accepting uniformitarian interpretations of field data. Did the empirical evidence give Keathley ‘no choice’ but to abandon the historicity of the Genesis text? Apparently so, since he says he was ‘forced’ to his current old-earth position (p. 1). In actuality, he could only be forced to change his position to old-earth if the propositions of geologists constitute a higher authority than the proclamations of God. It is a sad state of affairs for a Christian if he will have to stand before his Redeemer and tell Him that he had ‘no choice’ but to accommodate His infallible Word to the fallible wisdom of man.

A fallible authority

Keathley’s paper is titled ‘The confessions of a disappointed young-earthier’. The word ‘confession’ is appropriate considering the following:

“As you can probably tell, my decision to move from YEC to OEC was motivated strongly (but not exclusively) by a reevaluation of the empirical evidence” (p. 14).

“... I concede that I allow the findings of science to influence the way I approach the creation account in Genesis. I allow experience and evidence to have a significant role in the formation of my position. Young earth creationists are strongly critical of this approach and often characterize those who take this course in very harsh terms.⁴⁹ However, I reject the accusation that I allow the empirical evidence to subvert the authority of Scripture. In addition, I believe that their criticism is a case of the pot calling the kettle black” (p. 16).

When Scripture cannot mean what it plainly says because of some supposed inherent superiority of ‘experience’ and ‘empirical evidence’, certainly the authority of Scripture has indeed been subverted (figure 3). However, instead of openly denying infallibility and inerrancy he resorts to irrationalism in disregarding the law of non-contradiction. For in simultaneously affirming and denying the authority of Scripture, this is essentially what he has done. He is surely not the first to hold the doctrine of authority so inconsistently.⁵⁰ However, when one asserts that Scripture is the final authority but rejects a literal six-day creation, global Flood, or any other doctrine, not on hermeneutical grounds but on experiential and observational grounds, he has entered the world of contradiction

and irrationalism. Apparently Keathley’s ‘final authority’ does not have authority over his experience.

Furthermore, if Keathley is truly convinced that his embrace of old-earth creationism does not subvert the authority and inerrancy of Scripture (figure 3), then he is obliged to provide the exegetical substrate for his position. However, not even once does he defend his unidentified brand of old-earthism from the text of Scripture. This fact alone makes it plain that he is not treating the Scripture as his authority, at least not when it speaks to the subjects of creation and the Flood. It is quite insufficient for Keathley to merely take up a vague ‘old-earth creationism’ without addressing the biblical text and without putting forth one of the inevitable compromise ‘solutions’. If a professing Christian wants to be an old-earthier, it is incumbent upon him to find—rather, force—the oldness somewhere in the text. Perhaps that work is forthcoming.

It is important to point out that even if Keathley was willing to force his old-age view upon the text of Scripture in order to elucidate some consistency, it would still reveal the failed methodology of those who depend on external evidence in order to accept a doctrine revealed in God’s Word. We do not wait for confirmation of a doctrine in the physical world before we believe it but rather know in advance that the words of Scripture will not be controverted by any scientific discovery. We are not afraid of the potential discovery of Jesus’ bones, for example, because we know in advance on the basis of God’s Word that Jesus “rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4). Kulikovsky rightly noted that

“Scientific views should never play a part in the actual interpretation of Scripture. Interpretation must be based solely on the text and its context. Indeed, if the Bible is the Scripture of God, then no other authority, including scientific reasoning, may dictate how it is to be understood. In fact, it is *science* that needs to take *its* cues from biblical revelation [emphasis in original].”⁵¹

What makes Keathley’s position surprising is that he has gone out of his way to defend the authority of Scripture in an earlier publication titled, in fact, *Biblical Authority*.⁵² More recently he has rightly criticized Kenton Sparks and his postmodern plea to embrace “a way of understanding Scripture that paradoxically affirms inerrancy while admitting the human errors in Scripture”⁵³ Keathley accuses Sparks of retaining the term ‘inerrancy’ “while jettisoning its meaning”.⁵⁴ But is it not this postmodern definition of the word ‘inerrancy’ toward which Keathley himself is moving by embracing ‘old-earth creationism’? Has he not abandoned biblical inerrancy regarding the creation account if in six days God did *not* create the heaven and the earth? We cannot help but find it somewhat ironic that in reviewing Sparks’ work Keathley poses the question, “Can someone who forsakes the historicity of the Passover and the Exodus ... still honestly go by the label of evangelical?”⁵⁵ We would like to turn that question around and ask why the historicity of Creation Week and the Flood carries

no such significance. How is a proper view of inerrancy one in which the historicity of the Passover and Exodus is upheld but six-day creation and the Noachian Flood is denied?

The issue at hand is clear when one considers doctrines obviously integral to New Testament theology, just as the scriptural geologists warned.⁴⁸ If it is permissible to reject six-day creation and a global Flood because of a uniformitarian interpretation of data (masquerading as ‘the testimony of science’), how is this any different than rejecting the Resurrection for the same reason? Keathley readily admits that he allows “experience and evidence to have a significant role in the formation of [his] position” (p. 16). Surely his experience and evidence⁵⁶ would tell him that dead people don’t rise, blind people don’t suddenly obtain sight, and water doesn’t turn into wine. Keathley’s approach comes dangerously close to that of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers and higher critics. The critics were *looking* to undermine the doctrines of inspiration, inerrancy, and, subsequently, authority by filtering Scripture through the grid of ‘scientific knowledge’. Why would a Christian who defends inerrancy and has written a book on biblical authority want to follow the higher critical methods when it comes to Genesis?

Conclusion

Keathley set out to confess what he believes are legitimate concerns with the young-earth position but in so doing he confesses that his ultimate authority is not the Bible, at least when it comes to the creation account and the historic global Flood. The question now is how long will it be before Keathley realizes he cannot have his cake and eat it too? To be consistent, he must relinquish biblical inerrancy and the authority of Scripture in order to defend whatever distortions and denials of Genesis are necessary to maintain an old-earth position. Alternatively, he can purge his uniformitarian axioms and experientially based epistemology and retain inerrancy and biblical authority. Hopefully Keathley will rethink his departure from young-earth creationism. As we have seen with many who began by accommodating Genesis to old-earth beliefs, typically the cancer of compromise does not confine itself to the subjects of creation and the Flood. The lesson for all Christians is that a view of biblical authority where inerrancy is passage-specific and conditioned upon external evidence is logically untenable, biblically unsustainable, and dishonors the God who “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Proverbs 30:5).

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3. Keathley, K., The confessions of a disappointed young-earthier, 2013; www.theologyforthechurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Disappointed-young-earthier-03-06-13.pdf, accessed 14 May 2014.
4. www.theologyforthechurch.com/?p=363, accessed 14 May 2014.
5. The term ‘biblical creationism’ is preferred to ‘young-earth creationism’ because the only truly biblical position concerning creation and the Flood account is the position that upholds creation as a ‘recent’ (<10k years) event and recognizes the Flood as cataclysmic and global in scope. However, to keep with the terminology used in Keathley’s paper we will follow his use of ‘young-earth creationist’ and ‘young-earth creationism’.
6. In truth, the idea of a ‘presuppositionless position’ is quixotic. “The insight that there is no presuppositionless understanding is also widely acknowledged outside the confines of theology.” Maier, G., *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, p. 43, 1994.
7. Whitcomb, J.C. and Morris, H.M., *The Genesis Flood*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, p. 458, 1961.
8. Whitcomb and Morris, ref. 7, p. xvii.
9. Whitcomb, J.C., *Jesus Christ: Our Intelligent Designer*, Kainos Books, Waxhaw, NC, pp. 18, 24, 2011.
10. “While Morris and Whitcomb may be responsible for the resurgence of the young-earth creationist movement in the 20th century, their book [does not] account for the history of interpretation that clearly documents that the young-earth view was the mainstream and dominant interpretation right up until the time of the enlightenment.” Kulikovskiy, A.S., In the beginning ... they misunderstood, *J. Creation* 28(2):50, 2014.
11. See Mortenson, T. and Ury, T.H. (Eds.), *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2008, chs 1 and 2.
12. Erickson, M.J., *Christian Theology* (2nd edn), Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 1168, 1998.
13. Allis, O.T., *Prophecy and the Church* (1969), Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, p. 287 endnote 14, 2001.
14. Fields, W., *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (1976), Master Books, Green Forest, AR, p. 43, 2005.
15. Penn, L., Premillennial Dispensationalism, *Spiritual Counterfeits Project J.* 37(3)–37(4):7, 2014.
16. Literalism is often confused with letterism, an unwarranted hermeneutical approach to Scripture which takes even poetic or apocalyptic language as literal. In contrast to letterism, one is still properly ‘taking the Bible literally’, for example, when a reader perceives that Jesus’ statement about being the door is to be understood figuratively. For more on literalism versus letterism see Cooke, R., *A Survey of Biblical Interpretations*, self-published, Max Meadows, VA, pp. 143–1461, 982; Young, E.J., *Thy Word is Truth*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 137–139, 1957; See also Cosner, L. and Sarfati, J., Non-Christian philosopher clears up myths about Augustine and the term ‘literal’, *J. Creation* 27(2):9–10, 2013.
17. Garner, P., *The New Creationism: Building Scientific Theories on a Biblical Foundation*, Evangelical Press, Darlington, p. 183, 2009.
18. For example, see Wieland, C., Ham, K. and Sarfati, J., Maintaining creationist integrity; creation.com/maintaining-creationist-integrity-response-to-kent-hovind.
19. creation.com/arguments-we-think-creationists-should-not-use.
20. Humphreys’ interpretation starts with a straightforward reading of the passage in context. His reasoning was that if the sun, moon, and stars were set *in* the firmament, then the ‘firmament’ must refer to “interstellar space”, the “waters above” therefore “represent[ing] a boundary for interstellar space”. Humphreys, D.R., *Starlight and Time*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, p. 53, 1994.
21. For example, John Baumgardner wrote, “I concur with Dr. Russ Humphreys that the context of Genesis 1 seems to indicate strongly that the Hebrew word *raqia*, translated ‘firmament’ or ‘expanse’, represents the realm where God later placed the sun, moon, and stars, that is, interstellar space. If this reasoning is correct, then the waters which were separated to be ‘above the expanse’ would, at the end of Creation Week, and presumably also today, be beyond the most distant galaxy”; in: Bardwell, J. (Ed.) *The Flood Science Review*, In Jesus Name Productions, p. 603, 2011; see also Taylor, P.F., *The Six Days of Genesis*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, pp. 39–40, 2007.
22. Humphreys, ref. 20, p. 54.
23. Snelling, A.A., *Earth’s Catastrophic Past* Institute for Creation Research, Dallas,

- TX, p. 212, 2009.
24. Email on file, 25 May 2014.
 25. Humphreys' reasoning is persuasive and reinforces the fact that our understanding of the text is not based on observation or 'science'. However, it should be noted that one should not be dogmatic on such an exegesis either. As Batten *et al.* point out, "prepositions ... are somewhat flexible in Hebrew, as well as English ... The waters could be *above* the expanse and *in* the expanse, so we should perhaps be careful not to draw too much from these expressions" [emphasis in original], *The Creation Answers Book*, CMI, Queensland, p. 175, 2006.
 26. See Matthews, J.D., The stratigraphic geological column—a dead end, *J. Creation* 25(1):98–103, 2011; Woodmorappe, J., The geologic column: does it exist? *J. Creation* 13(2):77–82, 1999; Froede, C.R., *Geology by Design*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2007, ch. 1; Oard, M.J., Is the geological column a global sequence? *J. Creation* 24(1):56–64, 2010.
 27. Reed, J.K. and Oard, M.J. (Eds.), *The Geologic Column: Perspectives Within Diluvial Geology*, Creation Research Society, Chino Valley, AZ, 2006.
 28. Oard, M.J., The geological column is a general flood order with many exceptions, *J. Creation* 24(2):82, 2010.
 29. Reed, J.K., Klevberg, P. and Froede, C.R., Interpreting the rock record without the uniformitarian geologic column; in: Reed and Oard, ref. 27, p. 129.
 30. Recent YEC criticisms of plate tectonics include McGuire, M., Plate tectonics— inconsistencies in the model, *J. Creation* 28(2):104–115, 2014 and Oard, M.J., Is plate tectonics really occurring today? *J. Creation* 26(3):120–127, 2012.
 31. Johnson, J.J.S., Genesis is narrative history, not Hebrew poetry; in: *Creation Basics & Beyond*, ICR, Dallas, TX, pp. 41–46, 2013; Merrill, E.H., Genesis 1–11 as literal history; in: *The Genesis Factor* Bigalke, R.J., (Ed.), Master Books, Green Forest, AR, pp. 75–93, 2008. Boyd, S.W., Statistical determination of genre in biblical Hebrew: Evidence for an historical reading of Genesis 1:1–2:3; in: Vardiman, L., Snelling, A. and Chaffin, E. (Eds.), *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth (Vol. II)*, Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, CA, and Creation Research Society, Chino Valley, AZ, pp. 631–734, 2005.
 32. Lightner, J.K., What are species? *Creation Matters* 14(6):6–7, 2009.
 33. Frair, W., Baraminology—Classification of Created Organisms, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 37(2):82–91, 2000.
 34. See Woodmorappe, J., *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study*, Institute for Creation Research, Dallas, TX, pp. 180–183, 1996.
 35. Sarfati, J., *Refuting Compromise* (1st edn), Master Books, Green Forest, AR, p. 30, 2004.
 36. Fankhauser, G. and Cumming, K.B., Snake hybridization: a case for intrabaraminic diversity, in: Snelling, A.A. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Creationism* Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, and Institute for Creation Research, Dallas, TX, p. 130, 2008.
 37. Woodmorappe, J., *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods*, Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, CA, 1999.
 38. Snelling, ref. 23, pp. 155–161.
 39. "Thou coveredst it [the earth] with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled ..." (Ps. 104:6–7a).
 40. Oard, M.J., Excellent summary of scientific evidence for Creation and the Flood but controversial in some areas, *J. Creation* 25(1):33, 2011.
 41. Reed, J.K. and Williams, E.L., Battlegrounds of Natural History: Naturalism, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 48(2):165, 2011.
 42. Oard, M.J., Poor scholarship and self deception, *J. Creation* 23(2):50, 2009.
 43. creation.com/presuppositionalism-vs-evidentialism-and-is-the-human-genome-simple.
 44. Keathley, ref. 1, p. 219.
 45. Kulikovskiy, A.S., *Argumentum ad nihilum*: argument amounting to nothing, *J. Creation* 21(1):20–26, 2007.
 46. Woodmorappe, J., The anti-biblical agenda of early uniformitarians and evolutionists, *J. Creation* 28(2):26–28, 2014.
 47. Mortenson, T., *The Great Turning Point* Master Books, Green Forest, AR, p. 197, 2004.
 48. Mortenson, ref. 47, p. 215.
 49. His reference of a YEC who criticizes his own methodology in "very harsh terms" is Jonathan Sarfati in *Refuting Compromise*, but he does not provide a specific quote from the book or even cite a page number to support his allegation. Is Sarfati's work a scathing polemic against compromisers in which he characterizes such people in very harsh terms? Certainly not. It may well be that Ross is embarrassed by Sarfati's systematic deconstruction of progressive creation, and Sarfati himself noted in his introduction that sometimes feelings are hurt when someone's pet theory is attacked (pp. 20–27). But such is not an attack on the person but on the fallaciousness of the teaching. Instead of charging Sarfati with using harsh language, Keathley would have done well to diligently study Sarfati's book. Perhaps he would have found that no compromise position can stand against it.
 50. "Progressive creationists ... although they affirm the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, do not hold to it consistently and often pay only lip service to it when interpreting the early chapters of Genesis." Kulikovskiy, A.S., A foundation with a few cracks, *J. Creation* 22(1):25, 2008.
 51. Kulikovskiy, A.S., *Creation, Fall, Restoration: A Biblical Theology of Creation*, Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., Fearn, Scotland, p. 50, 2009.
 52. Keathley, K. and Draper, J.T., *Biblical Authority: The Critical Issue for the Body of Christ* B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2001.
 53. Keathley, K., Review of: God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship, by Kenton L. Sparks, *J. Evangelical Theological Society* 53(1):198, 2010.
 54. Keathley, ref. 53, p. 200.
 55. Keathley, ref. 53, p. 201.
 56. Particularly crucial to apologetics, it is important to note that the concept of 'evidence' is not limited to findings of a scientific nature. John Robbins wrote that "In specific instances, where conventional apologetics would require Christ to appeal to something other than Scripture, he failed to do so. He responded to the inquiries from the disciples of John the Baptist by quoting Scripture. He quoted Isaiah to explain why he spoke to the people in parables. After his resurrection, he taught the disciples the Old Testament. He reproached Thomas for not believing the Word and for demanding to see and touch. In his conversation with the rich, young ruler he quoted the Old Testament. He quoted the Old Testament to explain why he was driving the moneychangers and animal vendors out of the Temple. He repeatedly and sarcastically reproached the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers for their ignorance of the Scriptures: 'Have you not read?' 'You're a teacher of Israel and you don't know these things?' 'Go and learn what this means.' In short, Christ believed and taught that the Bible was the Word of God, the sufficient Word of God, and he based his apologetics exclusively on that Word." Robbins, J.W., The apologetics of Jesus and Paul, *The Trinity Review* May/June, p. 6, 1996.

Nick Sabato has been supporting CMI's efforts to curb compromise since 2003. He believes the central issue surrounding every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God is the subject of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. He is employed by the NYC Department of Sanitation and resides with his wife Julie and children Nathan and Hannah.